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**HEALTH AND THE HIGHER CULTURE.**

**A DISCOURSE**

**DELIVERED BEFORE THE AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH  
ASSOCIATION IN PHILADELPHIA.**

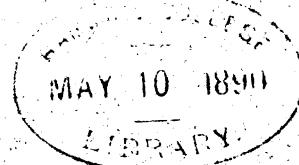
BY

**SAMUEL OSGOOD, D. D., LL. D.**

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## HEALTH AND THE HIGHER CULTURE.

By SAMUEL OSGOOD, D. D., LL. D.

A DISCOURSE BEFORE THE AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION, PHILADELPHIA,  
NOVEMBER 10, 1874.

A GREAT many definitions of the modern man have been given, and a catalogue of them would make a curious and interesting document. Some definitions rest upon superficial distinctions, and some go more into moral and intellectual characteristics. It has been said by a brilliant writer, that pantaloons distinguish the modern man above his predecessors of the toga, and that the era of pantaloons is the date of his emancipation, while others affirm that the modern man as such is a democrat, and that he thinks and acts for himself, and is master of the ballot and the bullet by virtue of the revolver and universal suffrage. I will not try to add to the number of exhaustive definitions, but will be content now with maintaining that the modern man, more positively and more generally than his predecessors, needs peculiar health for his essential and higher education. It may be that a select class in ancient and modern times were placed in circumstances very much like those which surround us and task our nerves and try our composure. Demosthenes and Pericles, Cicero and Virgil, Bernard and Dante lived, like ourselves, probably, more in their nerves than in their muscles, and were subject to much of the agitation that belongs to our current life.

But now the multitude of mankind are coming to a certain extent into the conditions of the literary class, becoming readers generally, and thinkers to a certain degree. We have no longer merely the proletary class whose business it is only to vegetate, nor the merely military class whose business it is to fight, nor the merely drudging class whose business it is only to work. We are all more or less taking the affairs of the world upon our own shoulders, and carrying its problems in our own heads. The workman's blouse is often made to cover as earnest a thinker as the professor's gown; and the railway, the telegraph, and the newspaper are everywhere, and everywhere making men and manners new, or, if you prefer the word, modern. We may observe a peculiar *agitation* in our current life, and what we call the news — that mighty and generally troubled tide — goes everywhere, and brings every man's brain into immediate contact with the whole stir of the race in such a way as to craze weak hearts and paralyze sensitive nerves. Then, too, our modern society is very *exacting* in its demands, and tends to increase our wants more than it increases our powers, carrying everywhere the love of luxuries and the taste for refinements, without carrying to the same extent the arts of industry and the powers of acquisition, giving to many men habits of expense beyond their available means, and nurturing in

most women susceptibilities and aspirations wholly out of proportion to their ability and their prospects. Add to this general *agitation* and *exaction* of modern society, the *unsettling* of the established faith and institutions, the assault upon all belief and all loyalty, whether in marriage, civil government, or religion, — and we surely see tendencies at work which make the lot of the modern man peculiar, which endanger his peace, his efficiency, and his fidelity, and call for an education of body and of mind in keeping with the needs of his time and his position.

We are in danger of becoming a nervous, uncomfortable, discontented, wretched race, unless we use our best thought and effort to bring the highest wisdom and virtue and order that are within our reach to bear upon our way of living. Hence the excellence of this American Health Association that now calls us together — where, indeed, I ought to be a learner rather than a teacher, and where I could not presume to open my lips, were it not that these learned doctors, who know so much more of the matter than I do, ask me to say something from my own point of view. Instead, then, of invading their territory, and parading my ignorance of the great science and art of medicine, I will be content to stand upon my own ground, and to treat of health and the higher culture as a man — who has been a preacher and pastor and general scholar — may be supposed to know the subject.

Strictly speaking, health is a part of the higher culture, for body and mind are practically inseparable, and we know nothing of the sound mind apart from sound blood and brain. I am willing, for the present purpose, to take Herbert Spencer's definition of life as the basis of our discussion, and to allow that *life is the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations*, if by external relations we comprehend those which are social and religious as well as those which are physical. If life is the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations, then healthy life is such adjustment truly and fully carried out, and he is the healthy man who lives in true relations with nature, man, and God.

I. Now what we want first of all in our care of health, as related to our higher culture, is such a condition and use of the bodily senses as to enable them to provide the mind with all that it needs from the kingdom of nature over which the senses preside. The mind needs to take in the light, and strength, and sweetness of the universe through every sensibility and organ of our being, by touch, and taste, and smell, and sight, and hearing, and I have no objection to add what the new philosophy calls the three added senses of musculation, calorition, and electriton. Whatever may be the mystery of the soul or of the spirit in man, our schooling must come through the senses, and the more quick and inspired is the mind in proportion as the senses are open wisely to the facts and forces of the universe.

We must touch substances to learn reality, and to know distances, and to be conscious of our own will. Certainly the proper training of the touch is a great part of education. We must taste food and drink, or we starve and die. What a world of culture opens here upon us in this matter of eating and drinking. In fact, cooking is the most important part of applied chemistry, and wisdom and virtue end where dyspepsia begins. It is well

that the schoolmaster is abroad ; but he walks and teaches in vain if the cook in the kitchen does not fit his scholars for their place at school ; and if, while God sends grain and meat, the devil sends cooks, as he often seems to do, even in this nineteenth century. We want cooking suited to the stomach and brain of the modern man, such food as will leave the brain time and freedom for its peculiar work, without having its exquisite powers called down into the deeps of the stomach by bad bread and meat, saleratus and grease, to do the work of digestion to which the boa-constrictor devotes himself, without having any higher service to perform. How much of thinking or no thinking, how much ignorance and folly, bad temper and utter despair, come from cooking and its familiar imp, dyspepsia. I commit this subject to the consideration of the American Health Association, and of the whole American people, quite sure that this *materia hygienica* is important as the *materia medica*. Our vices and our follies come in great part from what goes into our mouths, and the sword and gun are not such destroyers as the trencher and the glass. What a commentary upon the higher culture is our use of two products of the soil — spirits and tobacco. Great has been the power of the sceptre and the crozier, the sword and the pen ; but in our day the pipe and the bottle are likely to beat them all, and it may be that if the proverbial New Zealander ever comes to see London or New York or Philadelphia dismantled and depopulated, he may find there among the majestic ruins the instruments of their overthrow, and the symbols of their downfall — the pipe and the bottle, or the cigar box and the whiskey cask, that have stupefied the senses and distracted the wits of the race extinguished by their might.

The face and front of man turn toward the earth and the heavens in search of their appropriate aliment, and we feed not only upon what we eat and drink but upon all that we see and hear. We need to take in and digest the real sights and sounds of nature and art, or we pine away from lack of the elements of the higher culture. It is a wretched mistake to believe that second-hand impressions are enough, and that words and mere descriptions of nature and art will do well enough without the reality. As well say that descriptions of apples and wheat, of fish and game, of beef and mutton are as good to eat as the real growth of the fields and the waters. The great mistake of our scholastic training, from which we are now emancipating ourselves, is the taking of words for things instead of taking words from things, and we have been living and feeding our children upon mere verbiage instead of upon the facts of nature and life. The direct contact of the senses with real things ; the sight of rock and tree, bird and beast, forest and river, star and mountain ; the hearing of the music of creation in every voice of wave or wind or song or speech — this is health of body and mind, and lets us into the life and blessing of the universe. The process as well as the instruction is healthy and inspiriting, and it makes us all sprightly children in the Kindergarten, and not droning drudges in a prison-house, away from the green grass and the sunny skies. Undoubtedly, one great reason of the loss of power over men by the class of modern scholars has come from this want of a firm hold upon reality, and the chicken-chested, lantern-jawed,

shad-bellied, spider-legged race of Dominie Sampsons of every grade have been distanced not only in the senate hall, but even in the school and academy, by a new race of men, who have seen the kingdoms of nature for themselves, and brought the life of the woods and waters, the field and the mountain, into their breath and pulse, their pen and their voice.

Great health there is in nature, and in the art that is true to her ; and the masters of her lore have been generally rare examples of health of body and of mind. The great naturalists have been long-lived men, and what is more remarkable still, while the poets of human passion tend to burn themselves out in the fires amid which they live, the poets of nature who have studied the universe in its unity as well as in its variety, and sought to breathe in the higher life that pervades its kingdoms, have been remarkably healthy and long-lived men. What lessons thus speak to us in the career of Goethe and Wordsworth, octogenarians both ; of our own Bryant, who completed his eightieth year but a week since. How nobly his lines to our America —

"O Mother of a mighty race,  
Yet lovely in thy youthful grace," —

speak to us now as we interpret them in the call of our country to the higher education of her children in keeping with their magnificent heritage :

"For on thy cheeks the glow is spread  
That tints thy morning hills with red ;  
Thy step — the wild deer's rustling feet,  
Within thy woods, are not more fleet.  
Thy hopeful eye  
Is bright as thine own sunny sky."

II. Thus we are led to insist upon the importance of carrying up into the higher being of men the light and nurture that come from healthy relations with nature, and to believe that we greatly relieve the *agitations* of our modern life by the calming truth and beauty that reason and imagination derive from this true use of things. We go on now a step, and affirm that our higher education needs the tonic energy, the solar force that full health gives, and that this health, instead of resting merely in the muscles and building up the animal man, should be carried up into the brain and be made to serve the spiritual power, the mysterious will that is enthroned there by the Creator's hand. The superior culture needs not only the calm base, but the working force of healthful relations with the universe and its kingdoms, in order to meet the peculiar *exactions* of modern society.

Here our schooling has been sadly deficient, and in some respects it is becoming more so. It has depended too much upon diet and too little upon exercise ; and the diet has been practically poor for want of true exercise ; cramming with words has spoiled the digestion without stirring the limbs and the will. The best knowledge has not been given, nor would any knowledge, in the merely intellectual sense of the term, be true education. Knowledge is not power until applied by force, and our current education is wanting in force. Science, indeed, cannot be pursued without a certain force of will, and the men who are to observe the coming transit of Venus, carry resources, and present powers of limb, and sense, and will, that might

fight battles or build cities or reclaim deserts. But to skim over the record of their preparations or the results of their studies, which generally passes for knowledge, amounts to very little, and much of our schooling and reading is of this kind, and has little to do with force of character or strength of action.

Knowledge of itself is not power until carried into action. Science amounts to little until it goes into art. Even astronomy, the most sublime and independent of sciences, needs art to make its telescopes and use them, and art to note and record and classify and reduce to law their careful observations. There is no art without action, and no action without force. When Demosthenes said that eloquence was action, action, action, he meant to say not that it was mere gesture, but that it was living force, action in word and look and movement, from the full play of the life within. Is not all true art action, and must not all the business of mankind, whether in the arts of use or of beauty, if well done, be action? Whether we build a house or make a statue, whether we sail a ship or paint a picture, whether we sing a song or preach a sermon, must we not put action into it, the best force that is in us, and that can go out from us?

There is, undoubtedly, a mystery in the art power, whether in common business or in works of genius, and it cannot be made to order. But we may be sure that it depends largely upon healthy conditions of body and mind, and that the will power may be built up by healthful relations with the solar forces in nature, and may be carried up into the inmost chambers of the mind. Cæsar undoubtedly was a better writer and speaker, because he had been a soldier, and could put into his pen in his Commentaries the point and the fire that he had won from his sword in his campaigns; and David was a greater poet, because the hand that touched the lyre had grappled with the lion and the bear, and hit the Philistine on the head with a sling as unerring as the words that have reached the heart of the race, and will reach it evermore. If words are battles, it is because of the heroism that is in them; and surely every great fight, whether at the point of the bayonet, or of the pen, or of the tongue, is carried by force, and not by theory or sentiment — force of some kind, force that is not dreaming, but doing; not mere talk, but brave action.

Our schools and colleges need to find this out, and a large part of the great and growing disappointment of what are called our educated men comes from this source — the want of practical force corresponding with speculative ideas and sentimental aspirations. They find it very hard to get a living, and perhaps they will find it harder still. Indeed, a large part of the more susceptible and exacting class of society find more difficulties in the way of success than they expected, and they see the up-hill road rising before them when they thought that they had reached the top with its easy going. Hard work is still the lot of men, whether with bare hard hands or in kid gloves, and we are not only to return to solid specie payments, but to solid labor; not only to take the inflation out of the currency, but the gas out of ourselves, our fancies, and our living. The higher the education, the more earnest should be the work, the more intense the action, and the more thorough the training.

We need kings and princes of the true kind, not to tread us down, but to help us up and keep us up ; not to spend our money, but to save it ; not to set the fashion for our follies, but to rule over our utilities, and to give the brave word of command for our progress. The civil service reform must be carried everywhere. Shirks and drones and ninnies must be put aside, and their places filled by men who know what to do, and can and mean to do it well. In every department of life—in work-shops and stores, on farms and railroads, in homes and schools, in all business and all government—we need kings of action ; and while the old empires are eying royalty pretty sharply, and it does not take much to turn out an idler or a spendthrift from a throne, our Republic should be no less exacting, and should insist upon having the right men in the right place everywhere—the men who can do the work of office, and who are not merely greedy for its spoils. Health must be back of this true service, and has had much to do with its triumphs. The laws of health marched with King William and his son, with Bismarck and Von Moltke to the Rhine ; and diet and exercise, quite as much as the rifled cannon and the needle-gun, fought the battle of Sedan, and changed the face of the world.

More of this true power we need in our America. We, as a people, are more imperial in our expectations than in our performances. Our young men know how to spend more money than they can earn, and our young women too often feed their ambition upon romantic fancies, and fill their stomachs with enfeebling trash ; they dream of fortunes and palaces, and do not know how to make a shirt or a loaf of bread, to nurse an invalid or to tend a baby, to train a child or rule a household ; and sometimes they crave the jewels and orange blossoms of the bride, and repudiate the duties of the wife and the destiny of the mother ; and the race in some quarters is in danger of dying out because of this repudiation of the queenly dignity and fidelity of the sex.

In every sphere we need the superior force, the supreme energy of the educated will to meet the call of the hour. So only can we become free, and this will, born of God Himself, and drawing forces from the whole universe by healthy exercise, becomes the motor power of the imperial reason, the right hand of intelligence, even as the Divine Spirit is the finger of God and the messenger of the coeternal Word. This power we cannot abdicate without surrender of our birthright and betraying our trust. No mechanism, however ingenious or mighty, can take its place, for all machines come from the brain of man, and are subject to his hand. Steamer and locomotive, telegraph and power-loom, microscope and telescope, the knife that heals and the sword that slays, the rifled cannon that covers the field with the wounded, and the ambulance that takes them in mercy to the hospital—all these are subject to the hand of man, and depend upon his will for their true use. All instruments are but apparatus for man's fingers, tools to his will, and in a certain sense extensions of his touch. Then train that will wisely by the best diet of nature and life, and the best exercise of art.

III. So we come to our last point in our estimate of the bearing of health

upon the higher culture — I mean the habit of order and its basis in the laws of health and its periodicity. Here we are called to meet the *unsettling* tendencies of our time, and to try to settle the people down upon the true rule of living, before we can hope to settle their opinions as to the contested points of speculation. This, perhaps, is the important work now to be done by thinking and practical men. While the fight is going on between science and theology, practical philosophy should learn and teach us how to live true lives, and when we obey the just laws of living, we shall undoubtedly be in the way of seeing better into the nature of things, — natural, human, and divine. Here the great question opens upon us, What are the proper habits of a healthy, highly cultivated man in his relations to his own constitution and to the universe of things and beings in which he dwells? The mediæval church undertook to settle this whole matter for all and forever, and the Roman Catholic calendar and creed, pulpit and confessional, claimed to fix the basis and the movement of human life ; and its altar set forth the absolute history and the absolute law for all souls in what may be called the Epos and the Ethos of the Christendom of that time. It is not my aim now to criticise that system, or to go into any theological controversy ; least of all, to quarrel with the Catholic Church, Old Catholic as I claim to be. But it is very clear that modern thinking is getting into all churches, revising old rubrics and adding new. The old style of sage and of saint has gone by, and devotees no longer admire the typical ascetic of the past in his rags and dirt, skin and bones, without children, and away from homes and men, measuring sanctity by his absence from the world, and calling life heavenly in proportion as it became unearthly, and making man out to be the more godly as he was less human. This style of saint has gone by, and the doctors of medicine have a great deal to do with dismissing him. Those doctors have been making their mark upon opinion and life, preaching from a powerful pulpit of their own, and hearing more confessionals in our time than the clergy. Once the priests were physicians, now the physicians are becoming, in their way, priests, and giving laws not only to their own patients, but to society, and revising the rubrics and shaping the Epos and the Ethos of the race. The Pope himself takes modern medicine, and has a modern cook, and seeks health as the doctors advise.

What a confessor the skillful physician is, and in how many tongues he hears confessions! Rome hears her penitents tell their sins in a score of tongues in her great cathedral ; but the physician hears the murmurs of contrition from a harp of a thousand strings in a temple which is the universe in miniature, and to his practical ear or eye or touch, every beat of the pulse, every throb of the temples, every quiver of the lip, and every tremble of the tongue, every twitch of the muscles and tint of the cheek, every temper of the hand and hue of the eye, tells the unspoken secret of the life. No march of science threatens this confessional. Let the physician, then, be true to his priesthood!

Let our doctors do their work well, and the doctors of theology will have no cause of quarrel with them. We need a thorough study and application of the laws of health to the whole habit of the individual and of society.

We live by diet and exercise, or by what we receive and by what we do or give out, and upon the just relation between these two functions, or between receiving and giving, — the sound method of life, the true order of habit depends. The recent studies of the human constitution, the coördination and sequence of its senses and faculties, the harmony and the melody of its many strings, throw great light upon the true laws of living, and have done much to revise the practical code of men. We learn from them as never before that there is a law of combination and of continuity in our being as in music, and that certain functions go together, and certain functions succeed each other, while, throughout all these simultaneous and successive changes, there is a certain basis of constancy which we are always to observe and guard. Take our stand upon the constant fact of the human constitution and of the laws of the universe — we are to ask how the true simultaneous and successive changes are to be guided. We cannot do or receive all things at once ; what forces and sensibilities shall we try to move together, and what shall we hold in reserve for the proper time and place ; what receptions and movements belong to the hour or the day, and what are to be distributed through the week, or month, or year, or decade, or the threescore and ten years, or eternity ? Here the great law of periodicity opens upon us, and the doctors are to do their part to teach us to understand it — how to combine, and to continue work and rest, diet and exercise, labor and play in wise proportion, and to give to life the best possible constancy and variety. The health laws will be found to act powerfully upon the higher culture, upon the intellect and will, upon the affections and the imagination, and to win new joy to the spirit as the life of nature is more wisely studied and obeyed.

It does not do to play upon one string or upon all the strings of life at once, or all the time ; and judicious combination and sequence make the music of the man as of the harp. The trouble with us is that we make the sad mistake of both these extremes, and while with some life is one-stringed monotony, without change or recreation, with others it is many-stringed dissipation and distraction, without rest or reserve. We are greatly in need of the true philosophy here, and many of our foremost men die before their time because they do not have due change as well as rest, and do not add to their vocation a proper avocation. Business men, full of strength and ambition, who lived between work and festivity, — the day given to the clink of dollars and the evening to the clink of glasses, — have fallen before their threescore years and ten, often before threescore, by thousands ; while they who add to the work of the counting-house or of the study the daily walk or drive, the care of the farm or garden, live long lives, and the days and years sing to them, as they roll on, in health and joy.

Perhaps one reason of the undoubted fact that the clergy, especially the regular, well-educated Protestant clergy in Europe and America, are the most healthy and long-lived of any class of men, comes from the fact of the just combination and sequence of their lives. They study in the morning, and make visits generally in the afternoon, and they add to frugal living kind sociality and judicious recreation. They marry generally for love, are

free from the perils of poverty and of riches, and they combine much of the new culture with devout faith and service. Their record is an honorable one, and the old pastors and preachers have practiced as well as taught a wisdom that may not always be found with the new sensationists, who are likely to pay for their spasmodic brilliancy by burning out before their time.

We are to try to embody the lessons of such wise living in something that approaches to a social code, and we are to have a better understanding of the manners and customs that belong to our race. We cannot probably change essentially for the better the ancient year of faith, and science does not destroy, but deepens the record of the Incarnation which is at its basis; but we can justly modify the life based upon the old calendar by making more account of the calendar of nature, and the best use of the body as well as of the mind. We must keep the old Christmas, and may deepen its joy by reforming its revels. We may keep the old Lent, yet revise its asceticism, and learn how to starve out the devil without weakening the proper man or mortifying the good angels of God around and within us. As students of health we are to appreciate anew the needs of popular recreation, the worth of gardens, parks, music, pictures, sculpture, architecture, poetry, eloquence; and as the old game of war, we hope, is to make up less of the excitement and public life of the race, we may trust that the arts of peace will put forth new power and attractions, and that mankind will learn that they may sing and dance and march and rejoice together without the call to battle or the triumph over fields of blood. Yet we can keep the trumpet and the drum, the fife and the bugle, as well as the flute and the harp, while we live in peace with all men, and ask to be led by the Gospel of love to do the great work of humanity, to lift the burdens from the wretched, and to put away the ills that darken the world and curse the race.

So we shall have our true human joy, and the laws of health must be at its foundation to make the body serve its master, the mind, in the individual and in the race. The philosopher Comte, full of sagacity in spite of his frequent extravagance, has said that "the brain is a double placenta permanently placed between man and humanity." There is great truth in this, and we do much to bring man into true relations with his race by the due care of the blood and the brain. Let the doctors of health do their part toward this result, and they will find that they are helping on the higher work of humanity, and solving the highest problems of life and mind. True joy with true wisdom will come from this work, and the root of doubt will be taken out by the light and force of life.

This is not, indeed, the spirit of much that passes for our higher culture, and some of the saddest voices of our age come from our most highly educated and accomplished men. What a lamentation is that which has lately come from one of the most learned and brilliant minds of Germany, the invalid philosopher of Berlin, who, at thirty years of age, has written the most conspicuous and popular metaphysical book of the last decade—Edward von Hartmann, of Berlin. He says that the youth of manhood has

gone and died with Greece ; that we are a cursed and failing race, and extinction is our only hope, death the only salvation. As I speak of this invalid Pessimist, I cannot but think of three men of eighty years with whom I have had close relations, and whom you know well, — three Americans, eighty years old this very year, who speak a different language, and have no creed of despair, — Orville Dewey, James Walker, William Cullen Bryant, the orator of religion, the philosopher of conscience, and the poet of nature, — so unlike in gifts, yet so like in spirit and life ! I present them to you to receive your honor in return for their blessing — the blessing of fourscore years of their experience and of God's providence. They are full of faith and charity, of wisdom and joy. They have a kiss for little children, and a blessing for the green grass and the tender flower. They can see God in the stars, and find hope of heaven in the heart and conscience that attest the truth of the immortal life within. They are younger than old Greece ever was, and are ready to enter the kingdom of heaven as a little child. Health has joined with it higher culture to give them their age and their joy.

So then let us put our heads together, and do our best for ourselves and our race. More light, better air, good clothing, homes, exercise ! So also more true life, more faith, charity, wisdom, justice, piety ! Spinoza, whom many call the head of modern culture, said that healing or salvation comes from man's being in harmony or at one with the universe ; and there is wisdom in that saying. A greater than he has said that healing or salvation comes from man's being at one with God, and that to know Him truly is life eternal. Why separate the two thoughts ? Why may not medicine and theology agree to say together that healing comes from man's being at one with the universe and with God ? And let all the people say, Amen !







